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Chairperson: Ms. Intelmann ..... (Estonia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 40: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.13)

Draft resolution on permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

1. **The Chairperson** informed the Committee that Jordan and Mauritania had joined the sponsors.

2. **Mr. Edrees** (Egypt), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.13, said that it was a reflection of the Secretary-General's report (A/61/67-E/2006/13), which demonstrated that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continued to deepen the economic and social hardships of the Palestinian people. The majority of the paragraphs were similar to those of General Assembly resolution 60/183. However, some amended and updated language had been included and two new paragraphs had been inserted: the eleventh preambular paragraph, which expressed concern at the widespread destruction to vital infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; and paragraph 8, which called upon Israel to cease its destruction of vital infrastructure, including water pipelines and sewage networks.

Agenda item 55: Globalization and interdependence (*continued*)

(b) International migration and development (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.12)

Draft resolution on international migration and development

3. **Mr. Oosthuizen** (South Africa), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.12 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the resolution expressed the notion of partnership in advancing the dialogue on international migration and development and the need to focus on the challenges involved in migration. He hoped that the draft resolution, which was broadly based on agreed language from previous resolutions, would be supported by the Committee.

Agenda item 53: Sustainable development (*continued*) (A/61/225)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*) (A/61/258)

(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*) (A/61/268 and 277)

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (*continued*) (A/61/229)

(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (*continued*) (A/61/225)

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/61/225)

(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its ninth special session (*continued*) (A/61/322)

4. **Mr. Muffadal** (Sudan) said that the evident nexus between disaster and conflict warranted careful attention. Disasters generated conditions that were conducive to conflicts, while conflicts diverted much-needed resources from disaster preparedness and response. The floods that had swamped dozens of villages in the Sudan in the summer of 2006 had been exacerbated by the fact that the Government of National Unity had been dealing with the ongoing challenges of reconstruction, internal displacement and refugee resettlement, DDR programmes and humanitarian assistance to Darfur.

5. In order to enable a country like the Sudan to effectively deal with disasters, the international community needed to provide comprehensive assistance in fields such as early warning systems, capacity-building, peace support, rehabilitation and reconstruction, debt relief, investment and trade. The benefits would be felt beyond the borders of the Sudan,

ultimately contributing to food security and poverty eradication in the whole region.

6. The Sudan looked forward to the adoption of a draft resolution on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and called on the different stakeholders to increase their efforts to achieve the objectives of the Strategy.

7. **Ms. Filip** (Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and other international commitments had not produced the expected results because national decision makers had not understood that sustainable development involved social, economic and environmental considerations.

8. The Union was committed to promoting sustainable development approaches among parliaments and had recently adopted a resolution on the role of parliaments in environmental management and in combating global degradation of the environment. The members of the different parliaments had thus agreed that national budgets should be looked at through the prism of the environment. "Green budgets" viewed the management of public funds from the standpoint of sustainability, thereby harmonizing the economy with a variety of social objectives and making sustainable development a top priority in policymaking. Most importantly, the resolution prepared the political terrain for green budgets to be discussed in national and international forums.

9. Together with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), IPU had begun a training programme for members of parliament on environmental issues such as the sustainable management of water, biodiversity and energy. Plans had been made to produce a handbook for parliamentarians on sustainable development, which would cover the concrete applications of green budget principles.

10. **Mr. Bhagwat-Singh** (Observer for the World Conservation Union (IUCN)) said that the world was on the brink of a significant change in energy production and consumption patterns and that his organization was studying the implications of that change for biodiversity. It was important to ensure that new technologies were environmentally sustainable and that new solutions to energy challenges did not create worse conditions or undermine the Millennium Development Goals.

11. As regarded disaster reduction, IUCN was coordinating a major effort to improve fragile coastal ecosystems. In particular, it was promoting ecosystem restoration for sustainable livelihoods in the tsunami-ravaged areas of the Indian Ocean region through the Mangroves for the Future Initiative. IUCN was also associated with the Global Partnership for Forest Landscape Restoration, which was an initiative involving 11 countries, 11 international organizations and 3 NGOs.

12. As regarded desertification, IUCN was aware that the national action plans against desertification developed under the aegis of the Convention to Combat Desertification had not had the desired impact in many countries. It therefore stood ready to work with the ad hoc intergovernmental intersessional working group established by the parties to the Convention to share the lessons it had learned.

13. Concerning the Convention on Biological Diversity, IUCN urged Governments to reverse the current degradation of ecosystem services on which development depended. It supported the proposal of the Conference of the Parties to declare 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity and welcomed the progress made at the third session of the Conference with respect to the requirements for documentation accompanying the shipments of living modified organisms.

14. **Mr. Gospodinov** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that sustainable development required a culture of resilience at the community level and that all Governments and stakeholders needed to recognize the valuable role of volunteers as bridges between communities and national and local authorities.

15. Good preparedness, including programmes based on sustainable development at the community level, did more to diminish the impact of disasters than actual response work. In that respect, the Federation's vulnerability and capacity assessment programmes were invaluable. IFRC also contributed to preparedness for extreme weather conditions through its climate centre at The Hague.

16. No single element threatened a community's development more than the impact of disease. Many countries in Asia, Europe and Africa were threatened with social and economic disaster due to HIV/AIDS and avian flu. IFRC had worked with the United

Nations, the World Health Organization and other partners to address the threat of avian and human influenza and, through its national societies, was able to provide advice on avian flu in local languages.

17. Finally, Governments needed to ensure that all preparedness and response actions were delivered without discrimination of any kind and that gender perspectives were integrated in community disaster and health programmes.

18. **Mr. Bahlouli** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) said that energy and the environment formed one of the three pillars of the work of UNIDO. Its energy programmes aimed to de-link energy use from economic growth and reduce its environmental impacts, emphasizing energy-saving measures and the use of clean and sustainable energy for production, especially in rural areas. The Organization's environmental programmes sought to prevent industrial pollution and manage waste in an ecologically sound manner. Since 1994, UNIDO, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), had established 31 cleaner production programmes and centres around the world.

19. UNIDO also worked closely with governments, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. In the framework of GEF international waters programmes, UNIDO was promoting programmes to boost the productivity of water by lowering consumption and increasing reuse and recycling, as well as reducing waste and pollution. It was also assisting countries bordering large marine ecosystems to better manage their coastal areas and industrial fisheries. In addition, the Organization was working to help countries fulfil their obligations under the Montreal Protocol and the Stockholm Convention on the Elimination of Persistent Organic Pollutants and helping developing and transition countries to modernize their industrial production techniques through the Kyoto Protocol clean development mechanism.

20. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that her delegation wished to register serious concern and displeasure at the statement made the previous day by the delegation of Singapore, particularly the unnecessary and misleading references to Indonesia. She reiterated her Government's strong commitment to addressing the problem of the haze episodes caused by fires. As a demonstration of its seriousness, the Government had channelled resources from local governments and government institutions to put out as many fires as possible and to prevent their recurrence. For the same purpose, it was also vigorously enforcing laws on environmental protection and sustainable development. In addition, it had set aside some US$ 10 million for cloud-seeding and fire-fighting operations and had leased two Russian fire-fighting aircraft. Unfortunately, the unusually long dry season and the late arrival of the rainy season had frustrated the Government's best efforts. But it would persevere.

21. It was exceedingly counterproductive for Singapore to disparage the earnest efforts of the Indonesian Government to solve the haze problem. Indeed, the badgering by Singapore was tantamount to interference in the domestic affairs of Indonesia, which her delegation found deeply regrettable. Indonesia did not understand the motives of Singapore in making that disparaging statement, unless there was some malice behind it.

22. The environment was just one of many bilateral issues between Singapore and Indonesia. They included various issues related to environmental degradation, such as the export of hazardous waste, illegal logging and sand mining. The Government of Singapore would be well advised to look at the root causes of any problem and to view the dynamics of its bilateral relations with Indonesia in a broader context. It must also pay due attention to issues that were of great concern to Indonesia. For instance, Singapore must cease to give protection and sanctuary to corruptors of Indonesian origin and their ill-gotten wealth. On that issue, Singapore had not been forthcoming at all.

23. There were already bilateral and regional arrangements within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for addressing the problem of haze pollution, and her Government remained open to any initiative that would maximize cooperation on the problem. Full use should be made of those arrangements, instead of misusing the forum of the United Nations.

24. In conclusion, she wished the Committee to know that she had contacted the Indonesian Embassy in

Singapore the previous day and had been informed that the air in Singapore was clear and healthy.

25. **Mr. Cheok** (Singapore), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Singapore was heartened by the commitment that Indonesia was showing in dealing with the haze problem. His Government was appreciative of the measures taken thus far, in particular the pledge by the Indonesian President to ratify the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution. Singapore had also welcomed the Indonesian Government's hosting of the Sub-regional Ministerial Meeting on Transboundary Haze Pollution earlier in the month. The meeting had deemed that the haze problem had not been adequately addressed by the region and had agreed to seek international expertise so as to develop a comprehensive plan of action, with an effective monitoring and reporting mechanism.

26. Transboundary haze pollution was a problem that affected millions of lives, as the Indonesian Environment Minister himself had recognized, and it was a regional problem that affected not just Singapore, but also other countries in South-East Asia. The countries of the region had been trying for more than a decade to resolve it, with very limited success. The time had come for countries to put aside their differences and move forward to try to deal with the issue.

27. As for the air quality in Singapore, he understood that heavy rainfall, coupled with a change in the prevailing wind patterns, accounted for the recent improvement. However, earlier in October, air quality readings had reached the very unhealthy level of 150 on the Pollutant Standard Index. The problem was ongoing and Singapore dealt with it every year. His Government looked forward to working with friends and partners to find a definitive solution to the serious health and environmental issue of transboundary haze pollution.

28. He would refrain from commenting on the other issues raised by the representative of Indonesia, as he was not certain that they fell within the purview of the Second Committee.

Agenda item 54: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (*continued*) (A/61/262 and A/61/363)

29. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion of the item.

30. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, recalled that the decision to upgrade the status of UN-Habitat had been sponsored by the Group of 77 and China. They commended the progress made in the first four years by UN-Habitat as a full-fledged programme and noted with satisfaction its active role in assisting Member States to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to water and sanitation and to slum upgrading. The Group urged development partners to give UN-Habitat the financial and technical support it needed to meet the growing demands for assistance at both national and regional levels.

31. The United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation had never been adequately capitalized. While the resource mobilization strategy of UN-Habitat had increased resources steadily over the past five years, the continued inadequacy and unpredictability of funding for the Foundation, attributed to the imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked contributions and the dependence on a small number of donors, lessened the Programme's ability to function. Donors should consider increasing voluntary non-earmarked contributions to the Foundation, preferably on a multi-year basis. The international community and financial institutions should support the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund and the Slum Upgrading Facility. In addition, in order to revitalize the Foundation, the Secretary-General should consider increasing the regular budget of UN-Habitat.

32. Water and sanitation improvements and slum upgrading must be addressed in an integrated and holistic manner, particularly at the implementation level, as called for by the Commission on Sustainable Development, which had also stressed the strategic links between sustainable human settlements and sources of energy. The Group was pleased to note the progress made in raising awareness of slum, urbanization and urban poverty issues at the highest levels of government. Ministerial meetings in various regions had provided strong impetus for focusing on

such issues. The Group of 77 and China welcomed those efforts and invited the attention of the international community to their outcomes. The Group also underscored the importance of the UN-Habitat regional consultative forums, which provided opportunities for sharing knowledge, experience and best practices. UN-Habitat should promote those forums and, where possible, provide support for the participation of developing countries.

33. UN-Habitat had acquired invaluable experience in disaster preparedness and recovery and should be more involved in the activities of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in that area. To mitigate the impacts of disasters, the Group urged the international donor community to provide financial resources and technical expertise for the establishment of early warning systems.

34. In the ongoing reform process within the United Nations, programmes such as UN-Habitat, which had a clear and unique pro-poor mandate, should not be sacrificed or diluted. Rather, they should be bolstered and strengthened, with more predictable core funding for their work, including at country level.

35. **Mr. Ahmed-Sambo** (Nigeria) commended the efforts of UN-Habitat to address the challenges of overcrowding, unemployment, lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and lack of health and education facilities in cities. His delegation encouraged the Programme to sustain the momentum on those issues. Rapid urbanization was a challenge to all countries, but especially to developing countries. That was particularly true in Africa, the continent with the fastest urban growth rate. Rapid growth of cities was taking place at a time of worsening living conditions, pervasive poverty, unemployment and debilitating diseases. Slum upgrading programmes must therefore be underpinned by pro-poor urban policies, effective legislation, adequate budgetary allocations and multisectoral approaches. Central Governments should be actively involved in encouraging private-sector investment in pro-poor housing programmes. Partnership with civil society and other stakeholders was also imperative in tackling the problems of human settlements, as had been underscored at the third session of the World Urban Forum.

36. Nigeria had recently launched a water and sanitation forum aimed at providing access to sanitation and a safe and adequate clean water supply, especially for the poor. The forum attested to his Government's support for the water and sanitation and the slum upgrading initiatives of UN-Habitat.

37. Nigeria was pleased with the support that UN-Habitat had given to the African Union, especially through the establishment of the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development as a vehicle to facilitate implementation of the Habitat Agenda and further efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Africa. His delegation also noted with satisfaction the collaboration between UN-Habitat and the African Development Bank and other agencies. Those efforts should be vigorously supported to achieve sustainable shelter objectives in Africa.

38. The ability of UN-Habitat to deliver results would depend largely on the resources put at its disposal. Nigeria once again stressed the urgent need to address the obvious imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked resources, and called on donors to increase their non-earmarked contributions and thereby contribute to the realization of the objectives of nationally owned development strategies.

39. **Ms. Ovcharenko** (Russian Federation) said that her delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations on improving the efficiency of UN-Habitat and its cooperation with Governments at the country level. It particularly supported a recommendation of particular concern to States with economies in transition concerning the provision of secure tenure to the urban poor. In that connection, it supported UN-Habitat's efforts to respond more effectively to the urbanization of poverty and social exclusion at the national and international levels. It attached great importance to closer cooperation between UN-Habitat and other United Nations agencies and institutions. Data collection and analysis should be improved and monitoring networks should be more widely distributed, especially at the local and regional level. Mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of human settlements projects should be introduced.

40. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the outcome of the third session of the World Urban Forum, particularly the acknowledgement of the need for closer coordination among Governments, local authorities, civil society and international institutions in supporting initiatives to improve the living

conditions of the poorest and most vulnerable groups in urban areas.

41. The Russian Federation had recently stepped up its participation in the activities of UN-Habitat, as evidenced by the doubling of its contribution to the Programme's budget in 2006. The entry into force of a new bilateral agreement on cooperation between the Russian Federation and UN-Habitat heralded even closer cooperation in the future.

42. **Mr. Jha** (India) noted from the report of the Secretary-General in document A/61/262 that, by 2007, for the first time in human history more people would live in cities than in rural areas. That fact and other emerging trends would have a profound effect on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The twenty-first century would increasingly be an urban world, whose well-being would depend on how the problems of urban poverty, pollution, planning and infrastructure were tackled. It was no coincidence that the 2005 World Summit had recognized the urgent need for increased resources for affordable housing and infrastructure, prioritizing slum prevention and upgrading.

43. India recognized that the problem of shelter was closely linked to the eradication of poverty and that any policy on habitat needed a very strong pro-poor focus. The 1998 National Housing and Habitat Policy of the Government of India had not only recognized housing as a physical asset but had placed it in the context of the overall sustainable living habitat, highlighting the need for adequate infrastructure, including social infrastructure. India sought to achieve the target of housing for all by 2007.

44. Poverty continued to be one of the major developmental concerns for many developing countries, and providing infrastructure support in both urban and rural areas continued to be a major challenge. The developing countries needed financial and technical assistance for their efforts to eradicate poverty through generation of productive employment, creation of a durable economic infrastructure and food security.

45. The growth in urban population was reflected in the growth of slums. India had initiated substantial work to upgrade urban infrastructure and make shelter affordable for the poor. However, the proliferation of slums remained a major concern. The policy of the Indian Government endorsed slum upgrading and improvement, rather than clearance. It also sought to improve employment and livelihood opportunities in rural areas.

46. International cooperation to provide financial and technical assistance, including technology transfer, needed to be a priority if the developing countries were to achieve the targets agreed at the Millennium Summit. In the spirit of South-South solidarity, India was willing to continue sharing appropriate technology, particularly in the field of cost-effective, environmentally friendly and disaster-resistant construction. India was supportive of efforts to strengthen the capacity of UN-Habitat to fulfil its mandate, by the provision of non-earmarked, predictable funding and regular budget resources for its programme activities. UN-Habitat should focus on operational work through field projects in developing countries and continue to coordinate with multilateral and regional financial and development institutions.

47. **Mr. Shafil** (Bangladesh) observed that the pace of urbanization was rapidly growing worldwide. As a result, economic, social and political pressures of urban poverty, especially in developing countries, were causing further expansion of slums. The results were serious overcrowding and a lack of basic services, including water and sanitation. Sustainable urbanization was thus one of the most pressing challenges for the global community today. The slum population was expected to rise at a rate of 27 million people a year during the period 2000-2020.

48. The Millennium Declaration entailed the commitment to achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by the year 2020. However, the report *State of the World's Cities 2006/7* had furnished evidence of several emerging trends that would have a profound effect on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the Millennium Development Goals, specifically targets 10 and 11 of Goal 7, and paragraph 56 (m) of the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

49. Bangladesh remained committed to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda for providing sustainable human settlements and adequate shelter in urban areas. The Government, with the assistance of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and funding from the United Nations Development Programme, had undertaken a programme entitled "Local Partnerships for Urban Poverty Alleviation",

intended to assist the poor population to acquire a secure place to live, together with opportunities for work. It called on the donor community to provide more assistance, both financial and technical, to UN-Habitat programmes.

50. **Mr. Wang** Qi (People's Republic of China) noted that many developing countries were faced with severe challenges in the sustainable development of human settlements. Nevertheless, instead of being pessimistic and evading their responsibilities, they had made political commitments, formulated well-targeted policies and implemented proactive reform programmes.

51. However, the question of human settlements was far from being resolved, with more than 900 million people, or 30 per cent of the world's urban population, still living in slums. In the absence of decisive action, that number was expected to rise to 2 billion in 30 years, almost exclusively in developing countries. In order to achieve the two objectives of adequate shelter for all and sustainable development of human settlements in an urbanizing world pursued by Habitat II, the Habitat Agenda must be implemented comprehensively and effectively.

52. Sustained economic growth was crucial to solving the human settlements problem, especially for the developing countries. At the same time, as housing was an important component of sustainable development, a scientific approach must be adopted that stressed comprehensive and coordinated development, so that efforts in the housing area were synchronized with population growth, development of productivity, rational exploitation of resources and environmental protection.

53. National Governments, which bore the primary responsibility for solving the problems related to human settlements, needed to formulate and implement policies and strategies with identified priorities, based on their respective national conditions and capabilities. For its part, the international community, particularly the developed countries, should put the common interests of mankind before anything else, providing financial, trade and debt relief facilities to the developing countries in order to create favourable external conditions for their social and economic development, which in turn would enhance their capability to improve their human settlements. Local governments, the private sector and all other partners of the Habitat Agenda should be encouraged to devote their dynamism and creativity to that common endeavour.

54. UN-Habitat in recent years had done much useful work in raising public awareness and disseminating best practices, and in implementing the Habitat Agenda. China endorsed further strengthening of UN-Habitat so that it could enhance its activities at country level in standard-setting and capacity-building.

55. Currently, China was going through rapid urbanization. Improving the living conditions of its people and providing safe and healthy human settlements represented an important task for the Government. In order to fulfil its commitments under Habitat II and the General Assembly special session on human settlements, the Chinese Government had taken vigorous measures. It had given full rein to initiatives of local governments, increased input in the construction of human settlements and engaged in comprehensive management of human settlements. In housing construction, it advocated centralized planning, rational lay-out, integrated development and prefabricated construction. At the same time, it had also stepped up the work of renovating old cities. Using incentives such as awards and special titles, the Government had tried to encourage local governments to invest in improving human settlements and make greater efforts in urban ecology, including tree-planting. China's cities had roads and public transport facilities that were in good condition and fully functional; its work on reducing urban noise and air pollution had yielded results; and it had improved rubbish collection and recycling in urban areas.

56. China stood ready to enhance cooperation and exchanges with other countries, in a continuous effort to implement the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals, and to work for the improvement of human settlements, both in China and worldwide.

57. **Mr. Karanja** (Kenya) said that the urban development trends highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/262) were disturbing. The report indicated that, in some regions, the rate of slum formation was nearly equal to the rate of urban growth. It further reported that, in many sub-Saharan African cities, the slum population already accounted for over 70 per cent of the urban population. In addition, most slum-dwellers lived in worse conditions than those in rural areas, threatened by preventable diseases,

insecurity, unemployment and illiteracy. The international community needed to take immediate remedial action.

58. Financing affordable housing and slum upgrading remained a major challenge to developing countries. The 2005 World Summit had called on the international community to prioritize slum prevention, slum upgrading and provision of housing-related infrastructure. Kenya continued to collaborate with countries in its region through the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, of which Kenya had hosted a special session in April 2006. The session had developed a common framework for slum upgrading and prevention. Kenya welcomed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between UN-Habitat and the African Development Bank to implement the Water for African Cities programme.

59. Kenya would continue to work with UN-Habitat and other partners towards slum upgrading. The Government had established the Kenya Slum Upgrading, Low Cost Housing and Infrastructure Fund, amounting to about US$ 7 million in the current year, from which all related activities would be financed. In addition, it had recently reviewed its national housing policy and intended to submit to Parliament comprehensive legislation aimed at encouraging construction of more affordable housing.

60. Kenya commended the Member States that had responded to the fund-raising efforts of the Executive Director, resulting in increased contributions to the Human Settlements Foundation. However, there was still a need for the international community to increase voluntary non-earmarked contributions, preferably on a multi-year basis. Kenya also called on the international donor community and financial institutions to support the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund and the Slum Upgrading Facility for UN-Habitat to assist developing countries in mobilizing public investment and private capital for slum upgrading, shelter and basic services.

61. Kenya welcomed the promulgation by the Secretary-General of the special annex to the financial rules of the United Nations for the Human Settlements Foundation, which would enable the Foundation to start lending operations for human settlements projects using its voluntary contributions.

62. **Ms. Mlade** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) (IFRC)) emphasized the link between human settlements and natural disasters. On the one hand, human settlements might result from the mass movement of people displaced by natural disaster. On the other, human settlements were highly vulnerable to nature's fury, frequently being overcrowded, flimsily constructed and located in high-risk areas. The disasters that had struck South and South-East Asia in 2004 and 2005 illustrated both sides of that coin. The Indian Ocean tsunami had taken a particular toll along the coastlines where people lived in make<hift houses. In Pakistan, although most earthquake victims had received winterized shelter, others had been forced to leave their villages for urban areas.

63. As the response to those disasters had unfolded, the international humanitarian community had become acutely aware not only of the need to assist countries in mitigating the effects of natural disasters through housing policy, but also of the gaps in its own capacity to provide emergency shelter. Drawing on its years of experience in promoting disaster preparedness and response, IFRC had agreed to assume a global convening role in the provision of emergency shelter. Very recently, its Governing Board had ratified the memorandum of understanding signed by its Secretary General and the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, cementing the Federation's leadership of the shelter aspect of natural disasters.

64. In fulfilling that role, IFRC would uphold the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in particular that of independence. It would also focus on building an even closer relationship with UN-Habitat to ensure that, in meeting people's emergency shelter needs, the two organizations were also laying the groundwork for the recovery of their communities into the future. IFRC was also seeking to deepen its collaboration with national and local authorities. Governments had a primary responsibility for preparing and assisting people living in human settlements, for example by enforcing building codes and regulations to ensure that settlements could physically withstand the impact of a natural disaster, or by paying timely attention to land titling issues, following a disaster, in order to facilitate the building of both transitional and permanent homes. Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as key actors in national disaster preparedness programmes, could advise Governments on those important policy questions.

65. The challenges of human settlements were closely related to community health issues. In many countries, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were initiating special programmes to address the community health needs of people living in the most impoverished human settlements, from water and sanitation programmes to immunization campaigns. The Foundation's more than 97 million volunteers provided the expertise and community access necessary to implement those life-saving programmes. They also helped to create an urgently needed culture of prevention, in terms both of disaster preparedness and of preventive health measures.

66. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that the report *State of the World's Cities 2006/7* had documented the deteriorating living standards of the urban poor, particularly with respect to health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS and other diseases. More than half the world's poor would live in cities by 2007, and much more should be done to achieve significant improvements in the lives of 100 million slum-dwellers by 2002. Pro-poor policies and access to affordable housing were needed more than ever, and would require an integrated approach to human settlement development and to water and sanitation. It would be necessary to expand the provision of technical assistance to developing countries, identify disaster-prone areas and formulate mitigation strategies, and provide sustained technical assistance for reconstruction.

67. Pakistan was faced with serious challenges relating to urbanization, including an acute shortage of housing and overcrowding. The Government had taken a number of measures to address the problem, including upgrading and regularizing slums, involving local communities in the development of physical infrastructures, establishing new housing projects for middle and low-income population sectors and encouraging the private sector to invest in housing. It was also making improvements to urban transport systems and to water supply and sanitation systems, and participated in the relevant regional and international initiatives.

68 The devastating earthquake that had struck parts of northern Pakistan and Azad Kashmir in 2005 had left 3.5 million people without shelter. Although 90 per cent of the displaced had been relocated to transitional shelters, some 40,000 people still lived in tented communities, and Pakistan was therefore accelerating its reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, in partnership with the international community. However, UN-Habitat should increase its participation in the long-term rehabilitation process.

69. Although overall contributions to UN-Habitat had risen to $47.1 million in 2005, non-earmarked contributions remained low, at $10.5 million. That imbalance should be rectified, as it could hamper strategic planning and the timely and predictable delivery of services. Furthermore, UN-Habitat should be strengthened through the creation of an effective balance between its normative and operational activities. It was also essential to improve interagency cooperation in the area of human settlements and other crosscutting issues, and UN-Habitat would benefit from inclusion in the United Nations Development Group. Pakistan remained committed to implementing its commitments on human settlements under Agenda 21, the decisions of the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation and the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

70. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) welcomed the recognition, in the Secretary-General's report (A/61/262), that several low or middle-income States were starting to stabilize or reverse slum growth rates. Colombia had succeeded in controlling the formation of marginal neighbourhoods through a number of measures, included planned urban development and growth and expanded social investment with a view to generating better economic and employment opportunities in the poorest urban areas. If the right policies and practices were implemented, it was possible to prevent the formation of such neighbourhoods in any country, regardless of its wealth.

71. The Secretary-General's report also referred to the resources mobilized by UN-Habitat to finance projects, including World Bank mechanisms. Regional financial institutions could also play an effective role in that area. In Colombia, for example, the Inter-American Development Bank had sponsored a study that would provide the basis for strengthening certain urban housing programmes.

72. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the decisions of the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development were the main frame of reference for addressing issues such as water, basic sanitation and human settlements. Ensuring the right to water and housing was essential to the achievement of sustainable development,

eradication of poverty and reduction of inequity. States had a responsibility to promote and facilitate access to public services in areas with limited resources and to pursue comprehensive policies aimed at improving the economic and social conditions of communities marginalized by development progress. It was equally essential to gain access to the expertise, financial resources and technical support of the various institutions working in the areas of urban and rural development and on social issues, including at the international level.

73. The investments made by developing countries in those areas must be substantial and must be given the same degree of priority as investments in education, health, citizens' security and transport. It was also of critical importance to increase the flow of resources to developing countries. Donor countries should increase their ODA to developing nations, in accordance with the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and it was essential to transfer technology to developing countries and promote national institutional capacities. South-South cooperation on water, sanitation and human settlements was also of key importance. Lastly, Colombia endorsed the special call made to UN-Habitat to monitor closely the fulfilment of goals relating to human settlements, in particular the relevant international cooperation commitments.

74. **Ms. Halliyadde** (Sri Lanka) said that the urban poor were the most disempowered social sector with respect to access to health and education and the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other diseases. They also reflected the world's collective failure to come to terms with rapid urbanization and the consequences of globalization. In order to achieve the sustained development of human settlements, housing and environmental protection, it was essential to establish a strong democracy.

75. Although it was too early to judge the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), it had a number of positive aspects. The time had come to review and appraise the progress made in the implementation of Habitat II, identify obstacles and emerging issues, and set out future plans of action for implementing the Habitat Agenda.

76. Sri Lanka had introduced the necessary policies and laws to ensure the right to adequate shelter, which was constitutionally guaranteed. The Government had pledged to provide 65,000 housing units for those presently living in unauthorized and temporary dwellings in the city of Colombo, in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals. It was also taking steps to increase its national housing stock by promoting private/public partnerships, encouraging individual house builders, relocating slum and shanty dwellers, and implementing special housing programmes for targeted groups.

77. There should be a greater global partnership for cooperation in the areas of financial and technical assistance to strengthen the capacities of developing countries to address the growing problems relating to human settlements development in an increasingly urbanized world. In order to achieve the common objectives of the Habitat Agenda, there was a need for a fair and regular flow of assistance to developing countries. Sri Lanka was committed not only to implementing the Agenda, but also to consolidating its solidarity with all Member States that wished to redefine international cooperation in the context of rapidly expanding urbanization and globalization.

78. **Mr. Abreha** (Ethiopia) said that, although only 16 per cent of Ethiopia's population lived in urban areas, urbanization was occurring more rapidly than overall population growth, and the urban population was expected to double by 2020. The urban population included a high proportion of slum-dwellers, but Ethiopia could learn from the good practices of other developing countries to halt and reverse the formation of slums by anticipating and planning for growing urban populations. It would continue to cooperate very closely with UN-Habitat to address the challenges posed by the large number of slum-dwellers.

79. Given the urgent significance of urbanized poverty, it was important to focus on achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including the target of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020, and more generally on finding a practical and sustainable solution to the global fight against poverty. Ethiopia had made the achievement of integrated urbanization one of its main development objectives, and realized that developing countries could achieve the Goals only by allocating far greater resources to poverty reduction and to improving living standards in a sustainable manner. The Government had consistently promoted home ownership for low-income groups and had allocated part of its regular budget to shelter provision, infrastructure development,

policy formulation and capacity-building. It had launched an integrated housing development programme in large and medium-sized cities for middle and low-income households. Under the programme, the Government would finance the construction of 100,000 of the total 225,000 new housing units needed each year between 2005 and 2015.

80. UN-Habitat was to be commended for the partnerships it had formed with various stakeholders to achieve the goals outlined in the Habitat Agenda. His country was particularly encouraged by the partnerships with the African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank, and urged UN-Habitat and other partners to support its efforts to tackle the challenges of urbanization and achieve the slum-upgrading and water and sanitation targets of the Millennium Declaration.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.